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SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: SIX MORE TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS CONVICTIONS
REPORTED

11. (U) Summary: Convictions of six more trafficking offenders were reported in separate articles in the state-controlled press on April 30 - May 1, the latest examples of Uzbekistan's aggressive enforcement of its 2008 law and criminal code amendments. The Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported substantially higher convictions during the most recent reporting period for the annual TIP Report, and these articles demonstrate that there is indeed a concerted effort around the country to punish TIP offenders. Press reports on TIP-related issues continue to appear on an almost daily basis.

12. (U) on May 1, Tashkent Adolat newspaper published a report from Mirza Qahhorov, Deputy Prosecutor of the Chilonzor district of Tashkent City, entitled "None of Those Who Led People to Slavery Will Escape Punishment." It first described general worldwide statistics and noted that nearly 2,000 Uzbeks were trafficking victims in 2008. The article then reported that on January 20, a Qayum Ortiqov was convicted under Article 135, part 2, paragraph b, d, e, i, and j of the criminal code. The male offender had two female accomplices, Yekaterina Inozemtsova and her daughter, Lina Inozemtsova, who were the Director and Deputy Director, respectively, of a private company called Vesta Lemax.

13. (U) Ortiqov "took a large amount of money from more than 10 citizens" and promised that he and his partners would arrange jobs at a tile factory in the Krasnodar region of Russia. Instead, the "misled citizens were coldly received by the offenders' fellows" in Krasnodar, had their passports confiscated, and then put to work at a brick factory in a remote village. They were subjected, according to Qahhorov's article, to "awful living conditions" and forced to work 12-14 hours per day. They eventually returned home after three months, having received no salaries, and complained to authorities. "The court then administered relevant punishments to the offenders," although it does not specify any prison term (Note: The minimum according to the new law and criminal code amendments is three years imprisonment. End note.)

14. (U) On April 30, the Namangan Diyonat provincial newspaper reported that Zohid Rahmonov was convicted of trafficking in persons and sentenced to seven years in prison. The resident of Pop District was found guilty of leading nine fellow Uzbeks to Russia's Ryazan Region after promising them high-paying jobs. Rahmonov subsequently "turned the group over to a Russian man," who forced them to work without payment for several months.

¶5. (U) Also on April 30, the newspaper Huquq reported that a resident of Karakalpakstan Province, N. Baximbetov, was convicted for trafficking 13 Uzbeks into Kazakhstan, "where they were forced to do hard jobs."

Comment

¶6. (U) Each of these three cases involved trafficking for labor exploitation in which multiple Uzbeks were taken abroad under false pretenses. It may seem obvious that the victims would file criminal complaints upon their return, but until recently offenders may have assumed they could pull off the crime with relative impunity. More Uzbeks are aware that this exploitation is criminalized and victims are more assertive about turning to authorities. The stories also reflect the large scale of outbound labor migration, is another important reason why the Government of Uzbekistan decided to take TIP so seriously in recent times.

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